



HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE - IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342-1400

16 May 2007

To the Iraqi People:

I write to you as a partner in the ongoing effort to build a secure and stable Iraq. Our shared goal remains unchanged: one Iraq, with a government that is representative of and responsive to all its people, that provides security, that delivers basic services, that upholds the rule of law, and that respects individual rights.

Iraq's government was formed a year ago this month, and it can point to some important accomplishments. All recognize, however, that much work remains to be done, and the government's efforts over the coming months will be critical to whether or not this worthy endeavor succeeds.

I ask you to take an active role in the rebirth of your nation. Choose to reject violence and the sectarianism that fuels it. Choose to support an Iraq in which all citizens can live in harmony and mutual understanding. This is a pivotal time, and inaction may be tantamount to failure.

Hand-in-hand with the Iraqi Security Forces, the members of Multi-National Force-Iraq are working relentlessly to rid Iraqi cities and towns of extremists of all sects, including Al Qaeda-Iraq. We need your help if we are to quell the violence. Deny the enemy shelter, report any information you may have regarding his whereabouts, and be proud of and support your nation's security forces. Beyond that, please understand that any restrictions imposed on your freedom of movement are designed to make your markets, your streets, and your neighborhoods safer. As security improves, the barriers will come down as quickly as they went up, and you will be able to return to a more normal way of life.

I urge you not only to reject violence, but to embrace reconciliation. Now is the time for all Iraqis to come together and create the consensus needed to unite in pursuit of a common future. This future does not include extremist groups; it does include Arabs, Kurds, Turkomen, and Assyrians, Sunnis, Shia, Christians, and Yezidis – all living together, respectful of tribal, ethnic, and religious differences, and all bound by their belief in a government that serves all Iraqis. The Coalition can help you to realize this objective. In the end, however, success depends on you.

I had the opportunity to walk the streets of Baghdad this past weekend. Surrounded by young children, their faces full of cheer despite the challenges, I felt a renewed sense of urgency. The children of Iraq, as well as their parents and grandparents, deserve nothing less than a country free from fear and full of hope. Now, more than ever, is the time for Iraqis to come together and embrace reconciliation over confrontation. It is time to choose peace.

Sincerely,

David H. Petraeus
General, United States Army
Commanding